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Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1-14, and 22-28 are pending in this application. Independent claims 1, 8 and 22 have been amended. These amendments have been introduced for clarification purposes and are fully supported by the specification. Support for the amendments may be found from page 42, line 1 through page 43, line 6. No new matter has been added to the prosecution of this application. For at least the reasons stated below, Applicants believe that all claims are now in condition for allowance.

The 35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejections

Claims 1-14, 22-28 were rejected by the Examiner under section 103 as being unpatentable over Sheflott (5,802,493) in view of Tibbetts (6,158,044) in view of Flores (6,073,109) and in further view of Elance.com. As to the independent claims, the Examiner rejected them by asserting that Sheflott teaches the invention claimed. While reserving the right to present arguments regarding the teachings of Sheflott (and the other pieces of cited art), Applicants have amended the independent claims to further clarify what is claimed as the invention. The Examiner will find that neither Sheflott nor any combination of the cited references teaches each and every element of the current version of the claims.

Generally speaking, the independent claims have been amended to show an additional safeguard mechanism of the present invention. As previously claimed, certain embodiments of the present invention provide a user with a database of service provider information for manufacturing services. The user may make a request and the invention returns to the user service provider information that best matches the request. In addition, the invention returns to the user hyperlinks to additional information that may be useful. As now amended, an embodiment of the present invention further allows the user to place a new order with a chosen service provider. Before the order is placed, however, the invention verifies budget constraints. For example, the ordering process may only be executed when the total cost of the orders (i.e., the present order plus past orders) is under the budget set aside for a particular department or section in a company. Alternatively, the budget constraint may be whether a service provider's past dealings with the company of the user has exceeded a specific order limit. (See pages 42 and 43 of the specification.)

Since the rejections to the independent claims have been addressed, Applicants submit that all pending claims (independent and dependent) are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the claims and ask that a Notice of

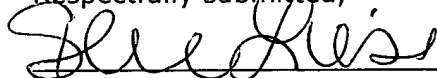
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Allowance be issued in this case. In the event a telephone conversation would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner may reach the undersigned at 612-607-7508. If any fees are due in connection with the filing of this paper, then the Commissioner is authorized to charge such fees including fees for any extension of time, to Deposit Account No. 50-1901 (Attorney Docket # 060021-358401).

Respectfully submitted,



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